



NEWS RELEASE

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Ellsworth Supermarket Dedicated **USDA Rural Development Funding Provided For Facility**

Ellsworth, KS. – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks, Agency staff, Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative of Mankato, KS, and local dignitaries participated in the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony of Gene's Heartland Foods. The project, funded in part by a USDA Rural Development *Rural Economic Development Loan Program* loan of \$450,000 and \$1.45 million of private funding, assisted in the construction and purchasing of equipment for the new 21,000 square foot supermarket. This new full-service food market, which replaced the only existing grocery store in Ellsworth, currently employs 10 individuals with 40 positions projected in the future.

State Director Banks, commented during the ceremony, "These business development funds help assist important local efforts to bring added economic growth and employment opportunities to the Ellsworth and surrounding counties. The loan, also supported by the technical assistance from Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. and USDA Rural Development, underscore our Nation's continued commitment to promote community and economic development for rural America."

Ray Gembala, General Manager for Clasen, Inc. said, "We appreciate the support from USDA Rural Development to provide this much needed supermarket to Ellsworth and the surrounding area. USDA was great to work with on this project. We also plan to expand our services to include specialized catering for weddings and area events."

In his remarks, Banks further stated, "USDA Rural Development will continue to work vigorously with our state's rural utility cooperatives to support local efforts in bringing new business investment to their communities. USDA Rural Development greatly appreciates the outstanding partnership with Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative. The Agency's *Rural Economic Development Loan Program* provides loan financing which supports important economic development opportunities for rural Kansas. We compliment Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative for utilizing this successful Agency program. The outstanding partnerships enjoyed by the Agency allow taxpayer dollars to return to Kansas, funding which is invested in our State to benefit all Kansans."

Dale Weinhold, Director of Member Services for Rolling Hills Electric Cooperative, Inc. commented, "Rolling Hills appreciates the opportunity to work with USDA Rural Development. The Agency has great programs, and this partnership helps create more good jobs. Rolling Hills is committed to serving our rural communities."

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Under the *Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program*, the Agency will make a zero-interest loan to the local rural utility cooperative. Upon receipt of the loan proceeds, following execution of loan documentation and meeting the conditions of the Program, the cooperative will then pass the loan proceeds on to the local applicant to finance job creation efforts. Funds can be used for a variety of purposes, including community facilities and infrastructure, improving access to local medical care and other projects that encourage a favorable climate for job creation and economic growth.

Over the past five years, USDA Rural Development in Kansas has been a leading state in delivering economic development assistance through the Agency's *Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program*. In fact, since 1998, the program has assisted at least 64 businesses, created and saved over 1430 jobs, and provided almost \$20.7 million in loans and grants across rural Kansas.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for rural Americans. As a venture capital entity, USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development delivered nearly \$235 million in community and economic development programming benefiting Kansas. For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development and its programs, log onto the Agency's website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks or call the Agency's state office at 785-271-2700.

USDA Rural Development – *Committed to the future of rural communities.*

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